

Wellness Notes

Esophagitis*

Part II

How is esophagitis diagnosed?

Once your doctor has performed a thorough physical examination and reviewed your medical history, there are several tests that can be used to diagnose esophagitis. These include:

Endoscopy: A test in which a long, flexible lighted tube called an endoscope is used to look at the esophagus

Biopsy: During this test, a small sample of the esophageal tissue is removed and then sent to a laboratory to be examined under a microscope.

Barium x-ray: During this procedure, x-rays are taken of the esophagus after the patient drinks a barium solution. Barium coats the lining of the esophagus and shows up white on an x-ray. This characteristic enables doctors to view any abnormalities.

How is esophagitis treated?

Treatment for esophagitis depends on its cause. While medications that block acid production may be recommended, other medications may be prescribed for infectious causes of esophagitis. To treat pain brought on by esophagitis, your doctor may give you an analgesic to gargle with and then swallow.

While being treated for esophagitis, there are certain steps you can take to help limit any discomfort that you may feel. These include:

- Avoiding spicy foods such as those with pepper, chili powder, curry and nutmeg
- Avoiding hard foods such as nuts, crackers, and raw vegetables
- Avoiding acidic foods and beverages such as tomatoes, oranges, grapefruits and their juices. Instead, try nectars and imitation fruit drinks with vitamin C
- Including more soft foods such as applesauce, cooked cereals, mashed potatoes, custards, puddings and high protein shakes in your diet
- Taking small bites and chewing your food thoroughly
- Avoiding alcohol and tobacco

What is the prognosis for esophagitis?

The causes of esophagitis usually respond to treatment, however some causes, such as acid reflux, may require long-term treatment.

* This information is provided by the Cleveland Clinic and is not intended to replace the medical advice of your doctor or health care provider. Please consult your health care provider for advice about a specific medical condition. For additional written health information, please contact the Health Information Center at the Cleveland Clinic (216) 444-3771 or toll-free (800) 223-2273 extension 43771 or visit www.clevelandclinic.org/health/. This document was last reviewed on: 2/15/2006 11/06

